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## Secrecy and freedom

Perhaps the most serious governmental crimes of this century have been committed in the name of "national security."

The White House "plumbers" of Watergate fame, engaging in burglaries. The CIA spying on Vietnam War dissenters, reading their mail illegally, plying unwitting Americans with LSD and other drugs in its "mind control" experiments. The FBI breaking into the homes of Americans, trying to provoke Dr. Martin Luther King to commit suicide, infiltrating and trying to discredit the women's movement, the civil rights movement.

Do Americans really forget so soon the abuses and horrors revealed only a few years ago?

Apparently they do, for once again the cry goes up for more governmental secrecy and censorship, for measures to seal forever the lips of those who work for the government, for draconian laws to punish journalists who write the "wrong" things — all this in the name of "national security."

Sen. Barry Goldwater wants a law under which journalists can be prosecuted for "treason" if they publish sensitive national security information. Goldwater professed outrage over published stories saying the United States was secretly shipping arms to the rebels in Afghanistan.

CIA Director Stansfield Turner says the Carter administration not only wants Congress to make it a crime for former CIA em-

ployees to disclose the names of CIA agents and operatives, but also wants a law imposing criminal penalties on journalists who use such information.

Turner also wants to limit to two the number of Senate committees exercising "oversight" regarding the agency's covert operations. He admits that the agency has been withholding information from the Senate Intelligence Committee, and he wants to continue to tell Congress only what he wishes, when he wishes. Furthermore, he wants CIA files exempted, for the most part, from the Freedom of Information Act.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Supreme Court, in an unsigned decree made without benefit of oral argument, rules that the CIA has the power and right to censor the writings of former employees, even if those employees do not reveal classified information, and that former employees who fail to submit writings for approval must turn over to the government any money they earn from their writings.

Let's deal with these demands:

**Goldwater:** Other members of Congress have noted that Goldwater might more properly direct his wrath at members of Congress or the executive branch who leak information like that relating to Afghanistan. But who wants to pretend that the Soviets had to read the newspapers to know that we were helping the rebels?

The Soviets never apologized for all the arms and

other assistance they gave to the Viet Cong. So why do we have to play a covert game in Afghanistan?

**The CIA:** When an agency like this has bungled, as the CIA did in Iran, and when administrative ham-handedness damages the morale of employees, it is easy to look for scapegoats. So Turner wants us to believe that too much congressional oversight and too free a press are his major problems. The press gag that Turner wants is, in fact, an "official secrets act." No agency has done more to prove that this country cannot afford such an act than the CIA.

**The Court decision:** I have no problem with the high court's finding that former CIA employee Frank W. Snepp had signed a contract that he willfully violated by failing to get CIA clearance for his book, *Decent Interval*. I am disturbed that this opinion did not give weight to the fact that Snepp did not reveal classified security secrets. Thus the ruling will lead many bureaucrats in every agency to believe that they can bind any federal employee not to write about what he or she did, heard, saw or even thought while on the job.

Extend this "censorship by contract," or by oath, and bureaucrats will cease to worry about whistleblowers revealing their incompetence or crookedness.

The United States is drifting out of fear of Russia, into a down-with-freedom malaise that will weaken this nation rather than enhance its security.